



DISPATCH

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Task Force Liberty Soldier Goes Head-to-Head with a V-bed

by Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta,
42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SUMMERALL, Bayji, IRAQ – Called 'V-beds' for short, Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs), are one of the deadliest weapons in the insurgents' arsenal – mobile car bombs and tools of terrorism faced by Iraqis, Iraqi security forces and Coalition

Staff Sgt. Herminio Rodriguez, had spotted the vehicle and were talking back and forth on the vehicle intercom in a clipped, efficient manner, with Rodriguez asking, "You see him?" and Levy responding, "Got 'em."

"If there's anything out of the ordinary, [the crew] tells me," Levy said.

The car was 40 meters and closing when Levy fired, upping the ante gradually, a type of engagement Coalition Forces call "escalation of force."

"I waited for his left front tire to swerve onto the median," Levy said. "At that moment he turned and drove straight at us. I put three to four rounds into the ground in front of him. It was still coming at us, so I put three to four more into the engine block of the vehicle."

But the vehicle

kept coming. Levy raised his 240 Bravo machine gun, fired seven to ten shots through the windshield, and the vehicle exploded – "a huge flame of smoke, body and car parts," according to Flynn.

Levy has distinct tan lines which run along his chin and jaw line, and fork toward his temples and the back of his neck – a gunner's sunburn formed from his helmet chinstrap, the mark of all those who work in Iraq's scorching, ultraviolet environment. The explosion, Levy said, was "hot, to say the least."

"My whole vision was the fireball," Levy said. "I fell back into the vehicle." Levy's first thought was that he had suffered shrapnel wounds to his face.

By now the crew was securing the scene and checking each other for wounds. Rodriguez, a native of Bakersfield Ca. and 82nd Airborne Division Soldier attached to DIVARTY, told Levy to look at him so he could check for wounds.

Levy in turn searched Rodriguez's expression for clues to his condition – shouting over and over if his face was badly wounded.

"I was yelling, to say the least," Levy said. Rodriguez told Levy he was fine, but that he needed to check him more closely for injuries. Levy suffered second-degree burns to his face from the explosion, which also melted his goggles and damaged the humvee.

Crater analysis revealed that car was loaded with five 130mm mortar rounds and 300 pounds of explosives. Flynn believes Levy's shooting caused the terrorist driving the V-bed to detonate it prematurely.

"The entire car was disintegrated," Flynn said.

Levy attributed the victory over the V-bed to a number of things.

"Teamwork's a big thing," Levy said. "Our [techniques, tactics and procedures] helped. Our training helped. Luck had something to do with it. It was lucky we spotted that vehicle."

Awareness on the road and spotting trouble like V-beds is part of the crew's routine, Levy said.

"Everyone calls out what they see at all times," Levy said. "The PSD soldiers get to a point where we like being on the road. Out there, there's nothing else on your mind...worries from home, nothing. Out on the road, you're only concerned with the threats all around you."

This vigilance leads to a high state of consciousness on the road, he added.

"You block out everything except what's on the road," he said. "It's just a rush. When you're on the road, your whole brain is filled with what's going on around you. You're not thinking about all your worries."

The crew's survival also gave Levy a rush. At a medical facility right after the event, Levy initially refused pain medicine before undergoing burn treatments.

"At that moment, I was on such a high because no one else got hurt, that I said no," he said.

The crew is scheduled to redeploy in October. Levy said he won't miss work details, the heat, the dust and the desert.

"There'll be a lot I miss, there'll be a lot I won't miss," he said. "I'm going to miss the friendship we all have, the tight bond. I'm going to miss being on the gun."

The crew knows each other well, Levy said.

"We're really tight. We work great together," he said. "We feel comfortable saying anything in front of each other. It helps a lot. Everyone on the vehicle is more proactive. Everyone knew their role when this happened."



BACK IN THE SADDLE: In the gunner's hatch of his humvee, Spc. Dean Levy poses with fellow crew members (left to right): Staff Sgt. Herminio Rodriguez, Spc. Patrick Grubert, and 42nd Division Artillery Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Flynn. The picture was taken on Levy's first day back to work after recovering from burns he suffered in the V-bed explosion.

Forces in their fight against the insurgency.

Last May, humvee gunner Spc. Dean Levy of Plymouth, Mass. went head-to-head with a V-bed and won – saving the lives of his fellow humvee crewmen.

The humvee crew, part of the 42nd Infantry Division Artillery Personal Security Detachment (PSD), was in a convoy near here when the crew spotted a car speeding toward them in the oncoming lane.

"He started swerving from the left lane to the right lane," Levy said.

Vehicles driving fast and erratically could be V-beds, said 42nd Infantry Division Artillery Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Flynn, of Taunton Mass., who was part of the humvee crew. The crew had discussed V-bed signs, were alert to them and ready to respond, he added.

"We talked about this a hundred times ... 'how do you stop a V-bed?'" Flynn said.

Flynn said the crew, including Levy and driver

Iraqi Police deliver school supplies

by Capt. Monte Hibbert,
116th BCT

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, Iraq— Iraqi police officers and Task Force Liberty Soldiers distributed over 600 student packets and 46 teacher packages to three Kirkuk-area elementary schools Sept. 28 as part of Operation

visits to the Al-Awa, Bajawan and Erwa Bin Alward Elementary Schools.

"The police officers enjoyed this opportunity to interact with the children," said Staff Sgt. Jerry Losing, an E Troop soldier who helped with the deliveries. "The children were well behaved and appreciative. The teachers seemed very appreciative also."

OPSS items are donated and shipped to Iraq by individuals and organizations in the United States. Once the supplies arrive in Iraq, Task Force Liberty Soldiers package deliver them to local authorities for distribution. A typical student package contains color markers or pencils, crayons, pencils, pens, a ruler, scissors, an eraser, a pencil sharpener, glue, writing paper, construction paper, and a coloring book. Teacher packets include a larger quantity of supplies and items like highlighters, staplers and red pens.

Through the OPSS program the 116th BCT is providing supplies to teachers and students and helping local Iraqi security forces gain

the trust and confidence of citizens. The unit's mission in Kirkuk Province includes supporting and training Iraqi security forces, assisting Iraq's new government, supporting economic development and facilitating communications.



An Iraqi policeman hands a packet of school supplies to a student at Erwa Bin Alward Elementary School in Kirkuk as part of an Operation Provide School Supplies visit. (Photo submitted by Task Force 2-116 Armor)

Provide School Supplies (OPSS).

Iraqi Police from the Yaychi and Arapha stations and 116th Brigade Combat Team Soldiers from Headquarters Platoon, E Troop, Task Force 2-116 Armor delivered the supplies during morning



Little girls line up at the Bajawan Elementary School in Kirkuk as part of an Operation Provide School Supplies visit that delivered 210 student and 15 teacher packets to the school. (Photo submitted by Task Force 2-116 Armor)



Help is 'One Source' away

Story by Master Sgt. Corine Lombardo
42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

TIKRIT, Iraq -- As Task Force Liberty Soldiers begin their long-awaited journey home, any number of concerns or problems might arise for Soldiers and their families.

Whether it's dealing with the stresses of adjusting back into family life after a long separation; health or emotional difficulties, financial or legal matters or just everyday issues, help is just a phone call or computer click away.

Military One Source is a free Department of Defense referral and information contract service available to all Soldiers, their spouses and dependent children, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

One Source consultants are available by phone or on line and will assist in reintegration, parenting and child care, education, relocation, financial and legal concerns and everyday issues such as finding services in a local community or consumer issues. Consultants also assist with emotional well-being, health and fitness, addiction and recovery, adult or child special needs, work concerns and crisis support.

"This is a unique opportunity and a great benefit for our Soldiers and their families", said Chaplain Col. Dan Robinson, 42nd Infantry Division Chaplain. "Many times Soldiers do not want to divulge problems or the need for help out of embarrassment, or concern about placing a blemish on their careers. Under most circumstances, this service is strictly confidential and remains outside their chain of command." Information is confidential except in cases of child or spouse abuse, or if an individual threatens to harm themselves or others.

All consultants are masters-level professionals in fields like child care, social work, education, psychology and counseling. Support is available in over 100 languages. Consultants may authorize face-to-face referrals in a soldier's community at no cost to the Soldier. There is no limit to the number of times Military One Source can be contacted, although face-to-face counseling is limited to six visits per person per issue. Legal issues are limited to one consultation per issue, but users may call back for additional consultations any time.

One Source is available to all active duty, National Guard and Reserves members, regardless of status; spouses and children of deployed service members and guardians of service members' children.

"This is the best thing the Army has ever done", said Capt. Carl Prober, 42nd Infantry Division Assistant Logistics Officer. When Prober needed assistance he contacted Military One Source and received an immediate referral to services that helped. "It doesn't matter what the problem is, you can call and they will set you in the right direction" added Prober.

Soldiers and family members can contact Military One Source online at www.militaryonesource.com and enter a username: military; and password: onesource; or by calling 1-800-342-9647 or 1-800-464-8107 within the US. Outside the US call 800-3429-6477. Collect calls are accepted from outside the US at 484-530-5947. En espanol, llame al: 877-989-5392.